

## **The Church of the Unbridled Orthodoxy - Revelation 2:1-7**

### **Introduction**

Welcome to My Thoughts and the first of seven segments of the Revelation Churches. Our first segment is called The Church of the Unbridled Orthodoxy. Let us take a look at these words unbridled and orthodoxy. Unbridled means uncontrolled or unconstrained. The meaning of orthodoxy is an authorized or generally accepted theory, doctrine, or practice.

My first of many questions that I will ask through this series is have you ever considered what our churches today look like through the eyes of Jesus? I think for most of us it is not something that would ordinarily be on our minds. The fact of the matter is the church is the creation of Christ and we would want to know how things look from His perspective.

The good news is we can do exactly that by reading what Jesus said to seven churches 2,000 years ago in the book of Revelation. These seven churches existed and were founded by the apostle Paul with his missionary team. They serve as representatives of all churches that would follow after them.

### **What Did Jesus Say?**

Over the next seven segments, we will look at these churches and see what Jesus had to say to them. We will also learn what He says that applies to our church today. As Jesus addresses each church, He does by giving instructions to the apostle John to write a letter to each of these churches.

The main point of these letters is that Jesus has something to say to the church. Some of what He says is praise and some of it is a rebuke. As followers of Christ, we want to hear both what we are doing right, and what we need to do differently.

### **The Loveless Church**

We are going to start this segment with the church at Ephesus. Open your Bibles to the Book of Revelation, Chapter Two, verses one through seven.

**<sup>1</sup>“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.**

**<sup>2</sup>“‘I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.**

**<sup>3</sup> I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.**

**<sup>4</sup> But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.**

**<sup>5</sup> Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.**

**<sup>6</sup> Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.**

**<sup>7</sup> He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.'**

From this text, we learn three things about truth in the church:

### **1. The Necessity of Truth**

Like her television show, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer," actress Sarah Michelle Gellar's personal borrows spirituality from a hodgepodge of religions. She says, "I consider myself a spiritual person. I believe in an idea of God, although it is my own personal ideal. I find most religions interesting, and I have been to every kind of denomination: Catholic, Christian, Jewish, Buddhist. I've taken bits from everything and customized it." — Sarah Michelle Gellar, *Scotland's Daily Record*

The fact that she does not know the difference between Buddhism and Christianity gives us some idea of her knowledge in this area, but the sad fact is what she states is common in this day and age.

There is a disregard for any *one* truth, any absolute, anything that says, "This is the way that it is and there are no other options," but the absolute truth is a necessity, especially when it comes to our faith in God. There are certain things that we must believe as a church and as individuals if we are going to function in such a way that is pleasing to God. There are three things that truth does for and to us:

- **Truth Drives Us**

**"I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance, — Revelation 2:2a**

Like the church in Ephesus, we have many people who work long and hard on behalf of the church. Many people give up personal time when they could be doing other things. They come to worship rehearsal, Bible study or classes, prepare to teach, serve on ministry teams, and witness to others about Jesus.

Why do they do that? They do it because they believe in the truth of Jesus Christ and it drives them to sacrifice themselves to fulfill His mission. This is something Jesus commands us for.

- **Truth Inspires Us**

The truth of Christ not only drives us to work for the kingdom but gives us the inspiration necessary to endure and triumph in a world that opposes us. We are not just working for a sterile, generic type of truth, but one that we believe will change the lives of those who surrender to it. We are not here wasting our breath or spinning in circles. We have a mandate

from Jesus Himself to share the most significant truths that have ever existed in the history of the world.

- **Truth Alerts Us**

This function of the truth I think has been lax in the churches for several decades. It is using the standard of truth, not just to lead people to Christ, but also to filter out those who distort the truth, yet who still claim to be a part of the kingdom.

**“and how you cannot bear with those who are evil but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary” – Revelation 2b-3.**

The church has the responsibility to discern between truth and error. The Ephesian church was faced with people claiming to be apostles, but they really weren't. Now how could they know that if they weren't champions of truth?

In our day and age, we have people making these same kinds of claims. There are people claiming the authority of Christ who deny the basic truths of Christianity. So, what do we do with them? We must decide that we will not tolerate them at all.

**“Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.” – Revelation 2:6**

The Nicolaitans, come up several times in this series. We will meet them again when we look at Pergamum where we read about those who follow Balaam and again in Thyatira with those following Jezebel.

What we need to notice is this is a threat against the truth of Christ from within the church, not outside it. These people are trying to infiltrate the church and Jesus commends the Ephesians for opposing them.

The standard of truth is the Word of God and if anyone opposes it by trying to distort or deny it is in reality working in opposition of the church of Jesus Christ. Jesus says, “We are commended if we do not allow that to happen.”

## **2. The Potential Dangers of Truth**

After what I just said, this point might sound a little off in left field but let me explain. Sometimes we can take the truth Christ has given us and actually begin worshipping the truth rather than the one who has given us the truth.

In other words, we become so zealous in our understanding that Jesus gets lost somewhere in the process. This is what I mean by the title of this message, “Unbridled Orthodoxy.” It is taking truth and using it in a way it was not intended.

**“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will**

**come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Yet this you have: you hate the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate” – Revelation 2:4-5.**

There are two potential dangers here:

- **Legalism**

Legalism is when we take God’s truth and use it as a club to beat other people over the head with it. It is when we begin to come up with a system of dos and don’ts that are not found in Scripture and build a system that decides who is and who is not a real Christian.

For instance, Jesus commends us for using discernment when someone denies He is God in the flesh or when they speak against a foundational truth of Christianity. Legalism is setting up rules of fellowship and acceptance based on certain criteria.

For example, a legalist might decide you could not possibly be a Christian because you have a worship style different from theirs, or use a translation of the Bible different from theirs, or because your women wear pants and make-up, or some other criteria the Bible never uses.

In reality, this is not following the truth of Christ at all, but following a counterfeit truth disguised as conservative Christianity.

- **Loss of Love**

Jesus said this type of church has lost both their love for Him and for each other. That is exactly what has happened to every church that misuses truth. They become so focused on what everyone looks like, and whether they agree with them on every little issue that they forget all about their purpose for being a Christian.

In the quest for doctrinal purity, they forget about the need to love, even those who disagree, and who do things differently than they do. Worst of all, they lose their capacity to love Christ as they once did.

Jesus told them if they did not get their act together, He would **“come and remove (their) lampstand from its place among the churches.”** He is saying that He will remove their light-giving capability, their testimony, and their ability to reach out to a lost world. If you know any churches like this you also know that is exactly what happens to them over time when they misuse the truth of Christ.

### **3. The Balance of Truth**

Obviously, there has to be some balance. We want to live by the truth, to have truth as our standard and do not want to compromise where the truth is concerned. So what do we do?

**KEY: TRUTH DEMONSTRATED THROUGH LOVE**

There is a truth that supersedes all other truths. It is the commandment to love.

**And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. – Matthew 22:37-39.**

Truth, in its purest form, is a balance between the facts Jesus has given to us and the expression of those truths through love for God and our fellow man. In fact, I would go so far as to say that if I am not loving God and those around me, I do not really understand what truth is. The two go hand in hand.

Jesus is speaking to a church that allowed this balance to get all out of whack and He tells them how to pull it back together. I know that some churches do not have this issue, but there are some that have a problem with it. Now, it becomes a heart issue otherwise Jesus would not be warning us about it.

Jesus gives three basic instructions that must be followed to turn this around Revelation 2:5, **“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”**

- **Remember**

He’s saying, **“Look back to how it used to be. Remember how it was when you were first saved? Regain that feeling of love that you once had.”**

If you are a Christian today, do you remember the time when you first came into a relationship with Jesus? Do you remember the excitement, the joy, and the expressions of love you felt for Him and all those around you? We need to remember and focus on that time to turn things around.

- **Repent**

It is interesting that Jesus ties this behavior together with a turning away from Him. Misusing truth and our love for Jesus is not just some small problem we can ignore.

It is in reality turning away from Jesus Himself and setting out on our own path. Whenever we turn away from Jesus there is a need to turn back to Him. The Bible calls this “repentance.” It is doing a U-Turn with your life and following God’s ways instead of your own.

- **Return**

Here is the same verse with a different point of emphasis. When we remember and repent, it is with the purpose in mind of returning to a place in our spiritual lives and in our church where Jesus is placed first.

**“Go back to work,”** Jesus says. **“Go back to loving and being loved. Go back to the following truth.” “Go back to being the kind of Christ Follower you were created to be.”**

**Conclusion**

At the end of His message to each to all of the churches, Jesus gives a promise, and it is a promise that can be applied to all of us. The promise to the Church at Ephesus as well as to our church today:

**He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. – Revelation 2:7.**

**I am Dale Van De Bogart and I fully agree on God's Word!**

If you are reading this and never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, what are you waiting for? Click on [FREE GIFT](#) and make Jesus the Lord of your life **TODAY!** Remember, read your Bible daily, it's good food! Like and follow us on [Facebook](#) and subscribe to our [YouTube](#) channel and watch this and other My Thoughts videos.

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